

A. INTRODUCTION

Neighborhood character is an amalgam of the many components that give an area its distinctive personality. These components can include land use; street layout; scale, type, and style of development; historic features; patterns and volumes of traffic; noise levels; and other physical or social characteristics that help define a community. However, not all of these elements affect neighborhood character in all cases; a neighborhood usually draws its distinctive character from a few defining elements. This chapter examines neighborhood character in the proposed rezoning area and in the adjacent neighborhoods, and the effects of the proposed actions on that character.

B. METHODOLOGY

STUDY AREAS

The analysis of neighborhood character is addressed in two geographical areas: the proposed rezoning area (primary study area) and adjacent neighborhoods (secondary study area). The study areas used for this analysis are the same as those used for the evaluation of land use, zoning, and public policy in Chapter 2, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy." As shown in Figure 2-1, the secondary study area extends approximately ½ mile from the primary study area boundary and is bounded generally by Coney Island Creek and the Belt Parkway to the north, Ocean Parkway to the east, the Atlantic Ocean to the south, and West 37th Street/Seagate to the west. Information from other chapters of this EIS is used to make the assessment of neighborhood character.

NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER COMPONENTS

According to the *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*, an assessment of neighborhood character is generally needed when an action would exceed preliminary thresholds in any one of the following areas of technical analysis: land use, urban design and visual resources, cultural resources, socioeconomic conditions, traffic and pedestrians, or noise. The proposed actions, which would result in major changes in the rezoning area, would affect many of the components of neighborhood character, including:

- *Land Use.* Development resulting from a proposed action would have the potential to change neighborhood character when it introduces a new, incompatible land use, conflicts with land use policy or other public plans for the area, changes land use character, or causes significant land use impacts.
- *Urban Design and Visual Resources.* In developed areas, urban design changes have the potential to affect neighborhood character by introducing substantially different building bulk, form, size, scale, or arrangement. Urban design changes may also affect block forms, street

patterns, or street hierarchies, as well as streetscape elements such as streetwalls and landscaping. Visual resource changes have the potential to affect neighborhood character by directly changing visual features, such as unique and important public view corridors and vistas, or public visual access to such features.

- *Historic Resources.* According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, when an action would result in substantial direct changes to a historic resource or substantial changes to public views of a resource, or when a historic resources analysis identifies a significant impact in this category, there is a potential to affect neighborhood character.
- *Socioeconomic Conditions.* Changes in socioeconomic conditions have the potential to affect neighborhood character when they result in substantial direct or indirect displacement or addition of population, employment, or businesses, or cause substantial differences in population or employment density.
- *Traffic and Pedestrians.* Changes in traffic and pedestrian conditions can affect neighborhood character in a number of ways. For traffic to have an effect on neighborhood character, it must be a contributing element to the character of the neighborhood (either by its absence or its presence), and it must change substantially as a result of the action. According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, such substantial traffic changes can include: substantial change in level of service (LOS); change in traffic patterns; change in roadway classifications; change in vehicle mixes; substantial increases in traffic volumes on residential streets; or significant traffic impacts as identified in that technical analysis. When a proposed action would result in substantially different pedestrian activity and circulation, it has the potential to affect neighborhood character.
- *Noise.* According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, for an action to affect neighborhood character in regard to noise, it would need to result in a significant adverse noise impact and a change in acceptability category, as defined by New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) external noise exposure standards.

This chapter's impact analysis focuses primarily on changes in the technical areas discussed above, since changes in these technical areas are most likely to affect neighborhood character. The *CEQR Technical Manual* states that several moderate changes, none of which rises to the level of a significant impact, could combine to create a significant impact on neighborhood character. Therefore, where appropriate, the effects of changes are also looked at cumulatively to determine whether, taken together, they would result in a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character.

C. EXISTING CONDITIONS

REZONING AREA

Coney Island is located at the southern border of Brooklyn, on the western portion of the Coney Island peninsula, which is defined by Coney Island Creek and the Atlantic Ocean. The proposed rezoning area is bounded generally by Surf Avenue, Mermaid Avenue, and the Brighton/Culver subway viaduct to the north, West 8th Street to the east, the Riegelmann Boardwalk to the south, and West 20th, West 22nd, and West 24th Streets to the west.

The rezoning area is characterized by a mix of vacant land, open amusement rides that operate only during summer months, low-rise entertainment and commercial buildings, the large recreational facilities of KeySpan Park and the Abe Stark Rink, and low-rise residential

buildings, some of which have ground-floor retail. Overall, aside from Coney Island's few remaining historic amusement-related icons, a few active frontages on Surf Avenue, and some residential and commercial buildings on Mermaid Avenue, much of the land throughout the proposed rezoning area is either vacant or underutilized.

The largest open space and recreational resources in the rezoning area are the elevated Riegelmann Boardwalk and the beach. The Boardwalk offers scenic and unobstructed beach and ocean views and inland views of the amusement area, which contains four famous visual and historic landmarks: the Parachute Jump, the Wonder Wheel, the Cyclone roller coaster, and the former Childs Restaurant building on the Boardwalk. The Boardwalk runs along the southern boundary of the rezoning area, and extends beyond the study area west to West 37th Street and east to Corbin Place. The Boardwalk is a wide, elevated structure that provides room for pedestrians and bicyclists (permitted before 10AM). It has benches, pavilions, and comfort stations. In the rezoning area, all of the cross streets that extend south of Surf Avenue to Riegelmann Boardwalk feature either a stairway or an access ramp to the elevated Boardwalk.

The street pattern in the rezoning area is part of the Coney Island peninsula's grid system with avenues running east-west and streets running north-south. Variations in the grid result from the curve of Surf Avenue and the presence of several superblocks. The major east-west streets in the rezoning area are Surf Avenue, which runs through the center of the rezoning area and has two traffic lanes in each direction; and Mermaid Avenue, a busy local retail street with one traffic lane in each direction between Stillwell Avenue and the Sea Gate neighborhood at the western end of Coney Island. Most of the north-south streets are one-way. South of Surf Avenue, there are several small pedestrian streets in the rezoning area that break up the larger street grid and are associated with the historic Coney Island amusement area.

As described in Chapter 8, "Urban Design and Visual Resources," building forms and density vary throughout the rezoning area. The majority of buildings in the Coney East subdistrict are small 1- and 2-story commercial and entertainment buildings. The subdistrict also contains open amusement rides that operate only during summer months, including monumental structures like the Wonder Wheel as well as a few remaining small open amusements. The Coney West subdistrict primarily contains parking lots and vacant land, with a few buildings, including the former Childs Restaurant on Riegelmann Boardwalk, a New York City Landmark, as well as the Abe Stark Rink and an office building directly north of Childs. The parking lots, totaling approximately 405,000 square feet (sf), serve the Brooklyn Cyclones during baseball season and are inactive the rest of the year. The seasonality of these lots creates a desolate landscape between Surf Avenue and the Boardwalk for most of the year, separating the surrounding community from the beach and amusement area. The Abe Stark Rink is primarily used by ice hockey leagues and is available for public skating sessions on the weekend.

The majority of the Coney North subdistrict is comprised of vacant lots and surface parking facilities, but the block bounded by West 15th Street and Stillwell Avenue is mostly occupied with a mix of 1- and 2-story commercial buildings and 2- to 4-story residential buildings with ground floor retail uses. The Mermaid Avenue subdistrict is characterized primarily by 1-story commercial brick buildings and 2- to 4-story brick residential buildings with ground floor retail. Mermaid Avenue functions as the local retail corridor for the adjacent residential neighborhood. However, retail uses are not diversified and lack standard neighborhood services such as grocery stores, bookstores, clothing stores, and sit-down restaurants.

There are eight architectural resources located in the proposed rezoning area. These resources are described in Chapter 7, "Historic Resources," and include the Cyclone, the Parachute Jump,

Coney Island Rezoning

the Wonder Wheel, the Astro Tower and Astroland Amusement Park Rocket amusement rides and park features; three former and current amusement district restaurants, the Childs Restaurant building on Surf Avenue, the Childs Restaurant building on the Boardwalk, and Nathan's Famous restaurant; and the Shore Theater.

As described in Chapter 3, "Socioeconomic Conditions," the business landscape in the rezoning area is dominated by eating and drinking establishments (26 percent of rezoning area businesses), and amusement park rides, games, and souvenir shops (34 percent of rezoning area businesses). Other businesses in the rezoning area include shopping and convenience goods stores, neighborhood service stores, and auto-related service stores. Approximately 49 of the 140 businesses in the rezoning area are located within the amusement park area.¹ However, Astroland officially closed at the end of summer 2008, and field visits indicate that as of December 2008 many of the Astroland businesses had closed and have been dismantled. Outside of the amusement parks (Deno's Wonder Wheel Park and the former Astroland), many of the proposed rezoning area's businesses are located along Surf Avenue and Mermaid Avenue.

The vast majority of active uses in the eastern portion of the proposed rezoning area (Coney East subdistrict) are seasonal. During the summer, hundreds of thousands of visitors come to enjoy the famous attractions: Nathan's Famous restaurant, Deno's Wonder Wheel, the Cyclone, Coney Island USA, and, before it was permanently closed, Astroland. During the winter, the area is largely boarded up and empty.

Within the rezoning area, traffic volumes are highest along Surf Avenue (east-west) and Stillwell Avenue (north-south). All of the 14 intersections analyzed within the rezoning area currently operate at LOS A, B, or C during all of the peak hours analyzed, with the exception of the Saturday PM peak hour, when two intersections, the intersections of Surf Avenue with 16th and 17th Streets, operate at LOS D. See Chapter 16, "Traffic and Parking," for more detail.

For mass transit, the rezoning area is served by the New York City Transit (NYCT) D, F, N, and Q subway lines and the X28, X29, X38, B36, B64, B68, B74, and B82 bus routes. The Stillwell Avenue subway station (D, F, N, and Q), and the West 8th Street subway station (F and Q) are both located in the northeastern portion of the rezoning area. As described in Chapter 17, "Transit and Pedestrians," the control area elements and stairways analyzed for these stations currently operate at acceptable LOS A or B during the analysis peak periods. All bus routes serving the rezoning area operate within guideline capacity on a typical weekday, except for the westbound B36 during the AM peak period. On Saturday, all bus routes operate within guideline capacity during both the midday and PM analysis time periods.

Also as described in Chapter 17, "Transit and Pedestrians," pedestrian traffic in the rezoning area is relatively low overall and all analyzed sidewalks and crosswalks function at acceptable levels, with the exception of the east crosswalk at the Stillwell Avenue and Surf Avenue intersection. The east crosswalk at this location currently operates at LOS F during the Saturday midday and PM peak periods. Pedestrian traffic is highest along Surf Avenue in the eastern portion of the rezoning area, due to the area's entertainment uses and the commercial uses on Surf Avenue.

¹ For purposes of a conservative analysis, all businesses within the leasable confines of Astroland Amusement Park (e.g., Pirate Ship or Dante's Inferno) are assumed to be separate business entities.

Noise levels in Coney North are moderate to relatively high, and reflect the level of vehicular and subway activities on the adjacent and nearby streets. Existing noise levels within Coney East and Coney West are relatively low and reflect the level of limited vehicular activity on the adjacent streets. In terms of CEQR noise exposure guidelines, existing noise levels range from acceptable to marginally unacceptable.

IMMEDIATELY ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS

The secondary study area is characterized primarily by residential uses at different densities, with smaller amounts of institutional, industrial, commercial, open space, and utility uses scattered throughout.

The eastern portion of the secondary study area contains the New York Aquarium and Asser Levy Park, as well as several high-rise apartment building complexes set on large superblocks. A number of community facility uses are also present, including police and fire stations and a branch of the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles.

The area north of the Coney North and Coney West portions of the proposed rezoning area is primarily composed of 2- to 3-story, 1- and 2-family row houses and semi-detached houses. Commercial and institutional uses, as well as light industrial uses (e.g., small warehouses and auto-repair shops) are interspersed among the residential uses, and there are a number of vacant lots and surface parking lots located throughout.

The western portion of the secondary study area is predominantly residential, with several high-rise residential towers operated by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), as well as 2- to 4-story row houses and semi-detached 1- and 2-family houses. Mermaid Avenue contains a number of ground-floor retail uses and commercial buildings serving local retail needs. Mermaid, Surf, and Neptune Avenues all contain a number of institutional uses, including schools and health care facilities. The 26-acre Kaiser Park is located north of Neptune Avenue.

Within the secondary study area, traffic volumes are highest along Crospey Avenue and Ocean Parkway, the two main routes that provide direct access to the Belt Parkway from Coney Island. None of the intersections analyzed in Chapter 16, "Traffic and Parking," are operating at overall LOS E or F during any of the peak hours analyzed. Some intersections along Neptune Avenue and Ocean Parkway currently operate at LOS D. Noise levels in areas north of the rezoning area boundary are moderate to relatively high, and reflect the level of vehicular and subway activities on the adjacent and nearby streets.

There is a distinct contrast between the proposed rezoning area, which is largely composed of vacant and underutilized land and is in many parts devoid of pedestrian activity, and the surrounding neighborhoods, which are predominantly built out with residential uses and smaller amounts of institutional, industrial, commercial, and utility uses.

D. THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

REZONING AREA

In the future without the proposed actions, it is expected that existing development trends of sporadic residential and commercial development and the further decline of the amusement district will continue. As described in Chapter 1, "Project Description," it is anticipated that in the future without the proposed actions the rezoning area will experience a net increase of approximately

Coney Island Rezoning

612 residential units, 92,351 sf of commercial space, and 71,946 sf of community facility space compared to existing conditions. This growth is concentrated in the Coney North and Mermaid Avenue subdistricts. Mermaid Avenue frontages and two blocks in the Coney North subdistrict are currently zoned with an R6 zoning district and a commercial overlay, which allows for development of residential medium-density uses with community facilities and ground-floor retail. Development anticipated to occur in the future without the proposed actions will add approximately 373 employees and 3,184 residents to the rezoning area.

Consistent with the last decade's development trends, the Coney East subdistrict is not expected to undergo any development in the future without the proposed actions, and the predominant land use in that subdistrict will continue to be vacant or underutilized land. Similarly, no development is expected in the Coney West areas proposed for rezoning to R5 under the proposed actions.

As described in Chapter 7, "Historic Resources," development anticipated in the future without the proposed actions could result in construction-related impacts to two architectural resources located within the rezoning area: the Shore Theater (New York City Landmark [NYCL]-eligible, State and National Registers of Historic Places [S/NR]-eligible) and Our Lady of Solace Roman Catholic Church (S/NR-eligible). The Parachute Jump (NYCL, S/NR) also has the potential to be impacted by construction activities from development of Steeplechase Plaza, in which it will be located; however since it is a designated NYCL, it would be protected from adjacent construction through the implementation of construction protection measures required under *TPPN #10/88*. In addition, Astroland Amusement Park was sold and closed at the end of summer 2008, as described above. Consequently, the Astro Tower and Rocket (S/NR-eligible) are assumed to be removed from the rezoning area in the future without the proposed actions. The Astro Tower is also a visual resource.

The topography, street pattern, and block shapes of the rezoning area will remain in their current configuration, continuing to limit upland views to Coney Island Beach and the Atlantic Ocean.

New development within the rezoning area in the future without the proposed actions will generate increased vehicular and pedestrian traffic throughout the rezoning area. Intersections throughout the rezoning area will be more congested in the morning, midday, and evening peak hours. Levels of service will deteriorate at a number of traffic intersections, with two intersections operating at LOS E or F during the weekday PM peak hour and eight intersections operating at LOS E or F during the Saturday PM peak hour.

All subway station elements will continue to operate at acceptable LOS C or better during the analysis peak periods in the future without the proposed actions. However, increased bus ridership will result in several study area bus routes exceeding guideline capacity during the weekday analysis periods, as compared to only one bus route under existing conditions. All analyzed pedestrian elements will continue to operate at acceptable levels during the analysis peak periods, with the exception of the east crosswalk at the Stillwell Avenue and Surf Avenue intersection, which will operate at LOS F during the Saturday peak periods.

Noise levels in the future without the proposed actions will increase at levels that would be barely perceptible and insignificant.

IMMEDIATELY ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS

In the future without the proposed actions, it is anticipated that the secondary study area would experience modest growth in commercial, community facility, and residential uses. Much of

this growth is associated with City initiatives intended to stimulate development in the area. The New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) is disposing of property at 3119-3127 Surf Avenue to a private developer to construct 77 low-income residential units. Along with the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), HPD has selected a developer for Coney Island Commons, a project on Surf Avenue between West 29th and 30th Streets involving the construction of 188 affordable units, a 40,000 sf YMCA community center, and accessory parking. As part of the proposed Coney Island Commons action, an adjacent, privately owned site would also be rezoned, and it is expected that it would be developed with 90 dwelling units and 19,000 sf of retail. HPD is also working with a non-profit developer to construct 12 owner-occupied, affordable residential units along West 20th Street between Neptune and Mermaid Avenues. Another City initiative includes the replacement of the temporary performance venue at Asser Levy Park with a permanent amphitheater.

There are also several private projects in the study area that will be completed prior to the 2019 analysis year, including medium- and high-density apartment buildings. The “Sochi” is a 27-story building with 89 dwelling units under construction at 271 Sea Breeze Avenue. The “Ocean Dreams” development received approval from CPC in 2005 to construct 313 dwelling units between West 35th and West 37th Streets, south of Surf Avenue. A 7-story structure at 3080 West 1st Street will have 34 dwelling units and a ground floor medical space upon completion. It is anticipated that these developments would introduce approximately 825 dwelling units and 89,000 sf of community facility use.

Overall, in the future without the proposed actions, an estimated 427 employees will be added to the secondary study area. Based on the 2000 Census, the secondary study area had a total of 8,780 employees. Therefore, in the future without the proposed actions, the total employment in the ½-mile study area will increase by 5 percent over existing conditions.

Traffic volumes will increase within the secondary study area in the future without the proposed actions. Levels of service will deteriorate at a number of traffic intersections, with three or four intersections operating at LOS E or F during the weekday peak hours and four intersections operating at LOS E or F during the Saturday PM peak hour.

E. PROBABLE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

REZONING AREA

Overall, the proposed actions would dramatically alter the neighborhood character of the proposed rezoning area from an area largely characterized by vacant and underutilized land to a vibrant mixed-use community with a 27-acre year-round amusement and entertainment district. All future development would be governed by the Special Coney Island District zoning text, which would establish urban design regulations for the rezoning area that would create a cohesive, coordinated design.

LAND USE IMPACTS ON NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

Land use is an important factor in determining neighborhood character because changes in the way land is used can alter both the look and feel of an area and the levels of activity in that area. Changes to land use can precipitate changes to neighborhood character in the areas of visual resources, urban design, socioeconomic conditions, vehicular and pedestrian traffic, and noise. The proposed actions would not result in changes to land use that would cause significant

Coney Island Rezoning

adverse impacts to neighborhood character. They would, in fact, result in beneficial changes to land use and neighborhood character.

In the future with the proposed actions, the rezoning and other public actions are expected to generate new development that would be compatible with surrounding land uses in the rezoning area. The amusements, eating and drinking establishments, and hotel development likely to occur as a result of the proposed actions in Coney East would be consistent with the existing land uses in that subdistrict, and would be supportive of preserving and growing the amusement character of Coney Island for future generations. The residential, commercial, and mixed-use development expected as a result of the proposed actions in the Coney West, Coney North, and Mermaid Avenue subdistricts would constitute a substantial change from conditions in the future without the proposed actions. However, these developments would improve largely vacant or underutilized properties, revitalizing these neglected conditions with residential and commercial uses that are complementary to the existing residential and local commercial character of these subdistricts.

Density would be increased only in appropriate areas and density increases would be consistent with public policy, as described in Chapter 2, “Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy.” New open space (the 1.41-acre Highland View Park and the 9.39-acre mapped amusement park) would be created, and access to the existing Riegelmann Boardwalk and beach would be enhanced. Overall, the proposed actions would encourage land uses that support the revitalization of the Coney Island amusement core while providing for appropriately scaled residential and retail development in the neighboring residential districts within the proposed rezoning area.

SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS ON NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

The proposed actions would introduce a combination of residential, commercial, amusement and hotel use, and as a result would add 5,876 residents, 2,878 employees, and an increased number of visitors to the new amusement area. Both new and enhanced establishments and attractions, as well as their associated employment, would add an additional consumer population that would contribute to the viability of the retail trade and the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services industry (including amusement and amusement-related trades) in the rezoning area, thereby helping to retain and enhance the historical amusement component of the rezoning area’s economic character.

As described in Chapter 3, “Socioeconomic Conditions,” the proposed actions would not result in significant adverse impacts as measured by the five socioeconomic areas of concern prescribed in the *CEQR Technical Manual*. These areas include direct displacement of a residential population; direct displacement of existing businesses and institutions; indirect displacement of a residential population; indirect displacement of businesses and institutions; and adverse effects on specific industries.

Any potential for direct business displacement was found not to be significant, and thus there would be no effect on the neighborhood character of the proposed rezoning area. Amusement-related businesses located on projected development sites, and which would be displaced under the proposed actions, collectively have a unique and substantial economic value to the City as defined under CEQR, and they are a defining element of neighborhood character from a socioeconomic perspective. However, the existing C7 zoning district has been ineffective in stimulating the development necessary to create a successful amusement area. In the last few years, many of Coney Island’s amusements have closed, such that only a handful remain. Economic activities in the rezoning area historically have been defined in part by Coney Island

amusement uses and visitation; with the proposed actions there would be new, year-round amusement-related uses and a substantial net increase in employment. In addition, although the potentially vulnerable businesses contribute to the City's economy and have economic value, neither the products nor services of the non-amusement businesses that would be displaced by the proposed actions contribute to the neighborhood character in a socioeconomic sense, and these businesses can be relocated without great difficulty.

URBAN DESIGN IMPACTS ON NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

The proposed actions would substantially change the urban design and visual character of the proposed rezoning area, which would in turn affect the neighborhood character of the rezoning area. Vacant and underutilized land—a prominent existing condition in the rezoning area—would be redeveloped with a mix of amusement, commercial, and residential uses, and would transform the rezoning area into a year-round urban amusement and entertainment destination with residential and retail uses outside the amusement area. The proposed Special District would improve the streetscape throughout the rezoning area, and the zoning text would establish urban design regulations for the rezoning area that would create a cohesive, coordinated design for the area that would include mandatory streetwall requirements, restrictions to building heights (that would reference the height of the Parachute Jump and preserve views to the Wonder Wheel, Cyclone, and Parachute Jump), specific use-groups, new east-west and north-south vehicular and pedestrian routes, and ground floor transparency requirements.

The proposed actions would alter the existing topography, street pattern, and block shapes of the rezoning area through regrading of new and existing streets, mapping of new streets, and demapping of existing streets in the Coney East and Coney West subdistricts. The grade changes would enhance views throughout the rezoning area by increasing views to Coney Island Beach and the Atlantic Ocean, while street reconfiguration would improve pedestrian and traffic circulation and pedestrian access to the open amusement area, Riegelmann Boardwalk, and beach. Raising the grade of the streets would also enable ground-floor commercial space to be closer to, or at, the 100-year floodplain elevation and would create a cohesive streetscape through the rezoning area.

Buildings constructed in the Coney East, Coney West, and Coney North subdistricts would be taller and bulkier than existing buildings in the rezoning area and buildings that would be constructed in the future without the proposed actions. The heights of new buildings and the placement of towers would, however, be regulated through the special district zoning text. Building heights would defer to the height of the Parachute Jump and low-rise buildings would be mandated along Wonder Wheel Way adjacent to the new mapped amusement park and along the Boardwalk in the Coney West subdistrict. Buildings would step down in height toward the Cyclone, Riegelmann Boardwalk, the beach, and the low-rise residential neighborhood along, and north of, Mermaid Avenue. In addition, they would be similar in height and bulk to many of the surrounding tall, residential developments.

This transformation of urban design in the rezoning area, while substantial, would be positive, improving the urban design and visual character of the rezoning area and thereby improving the overall character of the neighborhood. The proposed actions would not result in any significant adverse impact to neighborhood character.

HISTORIC RESOURCES IMPACT ON NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

As a result of the proposed actions, there could be significant adverse direct impacts to Nathan's Famous (S/NR-eligible), which is located on a potential development site and could be redeveloped under the reasonable worst-case development scenario (RWCDS), and potential significant adverse visual and contextual impacts to the Shore Theater (NYCL-eligible, S/NR-eligible), whose visual prominence on Surf Avenue could be diminished. However, after careful urban design analysis, the Coney Island Special District will define regulations acknowledging the scale and presence of the Shore Theater and use it as a guide for establishing streetwall heights along Surf Avenue, thus ensuring that new developments enhance its character. In addition, construction under the proposed actions could potentially result in impacts to three non-designated or listed resources, because they would not be afforded special protections under *TPPN #10/88*.

However, there are a number of historic structures that are prominent on the urban landscape and contribute significantly to the character of the neighborhood, and the context of these resources would be improved with the proposed actions. In particular, due to the new Wonder Wheel Way, there would be unobstructed east-west views to the Wonder Wheel, Cyclone, and Parachute Jump. Further, the newly mapped Parachute Way would provide new, unobstructed views south to the Parachute Jump. In addition, the proposed actions would have beneficial effects on the settings of the Wonder Wheel and Cyclone by including them within the new, large open amusement area; the Cyclone is currently an isolated amusement ride on the east side of West 10th Street, and while the Wonder Wheel is currently located within an existing amusement park, that park is small and partially surrounded by vacant land and parking lots.

Overall, while the proposed actions could potentially result in the redevelopment of Nathan's Famous, a reduction in the visual prominence of the Shore Theater, and potential construction impacts to three non-designated or listed resources, it would also improve the context for historic resources such as the Cyclone and Wonder Wheel, thereby maintaining and improving the historic character of the proposed rezoning area.

TRAFFIC, TRANSIT AND PEDESTRIAN IMPACTS ON NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

Development occurring as a result of the proposed actions would generate a substantial increase in automobile traffic throughout the rezoning area. As a result, levels of service would deteriorate at a number of traffic intersections in the proposed rezoning area. During weekday peak hours, between three and six intersections (depending on the peak hour analyzed) would go from LOS D or better in the future without the proposed actions to LOS E or F in the future with the proposed actions. During the Saturday midday and PM peak hours, levels of service would decrease to LOS E or F from LOS D or better at six and four intersections, respectively. Overall, within the rezoning area, the proposed actions are expected to have significant adverse traffic impacts at between 8 and 12 intersections, depending on the peak hour analyzed. However, the mitigation analysis indicates that some of the significantly impacted intersections would be fully mitigated with a series of traffic improvements. Unmitigated increases in traffic at the remaining impacted locations would not result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character because the change in traffic over conditions in the future without the proposed actions would be small enough that it would not have a noticeable effect on the character of the rezoning area.

The proposed actions would increase bus ridership and result in significant adverse impacts to the B36, B68, B74, B82, and X38 bus routes during the weekday analysis peak periods and for

the B36 bus route during the Saturday analysis peak periods. The proposed actions would also increase pedestrian activity in the proposed rezoning area. These increases would result in significant adverse impacts for the east and west crosswalks at the Stillwell Avenue and Surf Avenue intersection during the weekday and Saturday analysis peak periods. However, as discussed in Chapter 22, “Mitigation,” these impacts would be fully mitigated and no significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character would result.

Development taking place as a result of the proposed actions would increase pedestrian activity in parts of the rezoning area that currently experience very little activity. This new activity would enliven the streets and would have a markedly positive effect on neighborhood character within the rezoning area.

NOISE IMPACTS ON NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

The proposed actions would result in significant adverse impacts at receptor site 11 (Stillwell Avenue between Surf Avenue and Riegelmann Boardwalk) within the proposed rezoning area. The exceedances would be due principally to noise generated by the activities in the proposed amusement park. Noise levels at this site would change from the “acceptable” category to the “marginally unacceptable” category. However, site 11 is not located in an area where a low level of noise is a defining feature of the neighborhood’s character and, further, there are no existing noise-sensitive uses around receptor site 11. Thus, the proposed actions would not result in an impact on neighborhood character.

IMMEDIATELY ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS

The probable impact of the proposed actions on neighborhood character in the surrounding areas is expected to be largely beneficial. Issues associated with the proposed actions as they relate to neighborhood character focus on the compatibility of the new land uses and densities with those already established in the study area, the potential for change in demographic characteristics of the area’s residential population, and the effect of the proposed actions on the area’s visual resources and view corridors.

LAND USE IMPACTS ON NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

As discussed in Chapter 2, “Land Use, Zoning and Public Policy,” the proposed actions are not expected to affect land use patterns in the secondary study area, which is predominantly built out with residential uses and smaller amounts of institutional, industrial, commercial, and utility uses. The new residential and commercial uses expected to occur as a result of the proposed actions are compatible with the residential land uses in the secondary study area. Further, it is intended that the future development would act as an extension of the neighborhood activity to the north and west of the rezoning area, forging a strengthened connection between these areas and the amusement district, beach, and Riegelmann Boardwalk.

SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS ON NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

The proposed actions would bring a substantial new population to the study area, increasing the residential population by approximately 11.7 percent over the future without the proposed actions. As discussed in Chapter 3, “Socioeconomic Conditions,” although this new population is expected to have different socioeconomic characteristics compared with the overall character of the study area population, any potential for indirect residential displacement in the study area

Coney Island Rezoning

was found not to be significant for EIS purposes. While the proposed actions could potentially accelerate a trend toward increased rents that would occur in the future without the proposed actions, the population vulnerable to indirect displacement (1,497 residents) represents only 3.2 percent of the total estimated 2007 population in the study area. A population loss of this magnitude would not substantially alter the demographic composition of the study area, and therefore would not have the potential to alter neighborhood character in the study area. In addition, approximately 25.3 percent of the entire housing stock in the study area are either New York City Housing Authority-owned properties or other government-financed properties that house low- to moderate- income families. These, in combination with the 607 new affordable housing units introduced by the proposed actions, would maintain a wide range of income in the ½-mile study area in the future with the proposed actions.

The proposed actions also would not result in significant adverse impacts due to indirect business and institutional displacement. While the proposed actions could result in the indirect displacement of some existing retail establishments in the immediate vicinity of the rezoning area due to rent increases, these businesses, while notable, are not the only element that defines neighborhood character.

Overall, the proposed actions would introduce substantial new population and economic uses to the study area, but would not result in significant adverse indirect displacement impacts in neighborhoods surrounding the rezoning area and, therefore, would not lead to a significant adverse neighborhood character impact.

URBAN DESIGN IMPACTS ON NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

Changes related to urban design and visual resources within the proposed rezoning area would have a limited effect on the neighborhood character of the larger study area, and any changes would be positive.

Since the proposed actions would result in the creation of new streets and demapping of several existing streets within the rezoning area, these changes would result in better connectivity throughout the study area. Also as a result of street mappings within Coney East and Coney West, smaller blocks would be created, which would create a more pedestrian-friendly environment and be in keeping with the typical block shapes located in the majority of the surrounding study area.

For the most part, changes to the rezoning area streetscape would not affect the streetscape of the larger study area. However, the glazed and transparent active ground floor uses required under the proposed zoning along Surf Avenue would provide street-level visual interest, improve pedestrian activity and safety, and introduce new neighborhood amenities, thus enhancing the commercial corridor along Surf Avenue that runs through the rezoning and study areas. Additionally, the proposed actions would enhance the character of Riegelmann Boardwalk, and the proposed Highland View Park would provide greenery and streetscape improvements to the western portion of the study area.

While the tallest portions of the proposed buildings constructed under the RWCDs would become the tallest buildings in the study area, many of the existing NYCHA and privately owned apartment buildings in the study area are of considerable bulk and height, are set back from the street, and have long tower slab lengths. Further, the shorter towers on the projected and potential developments sites would be similar in height to, or shorter than, the existing high-rise housing complexes in the study area. Therefore, development under the proposed actions

would improve the urban design patterns that characterize the study area and would have a beneficial effect on neighborhood character, especially through the activation of ground floor retail and the creation of a pedestrian-friendly environment.

The proposed actions would not have any significant adverse impacts on visual resources located within the study area (the Stillwell Avenue Subway Station, Coney Island Beach, and the Atlantic Ocean) or on views of visual resources located within the rezoning area. While views south to the Parachute Jump along the north-south streets in the northern portion of the study area could be obstructed due to the potential building heights and bulk of development sites in Coney North under the proposed zoning, mapping Parachute Way south of Surf Avenue would create a new view corridor to the Parachute Jump, enhancing views to this iconic structure. East-west views along Riegelmann Boardwalk from within the study area would be preserved due to the height restrictions of commercial buildings that could be developed along the Boardwalk in Coney West and to the openness of the adjacent, mapped amusement park. Views west along this view corridor from the eastern portion of the study area would be enhanced due to the proposed expanded open amusement area, which would result in a more visually interesting setting for the Boardwalk.

HISTORIC RESOURCES IMPACTS ON NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

The proposed actions would not adversely affect the context of any historic resources in neighborhoods surrounding the proposed rezoning area. To the contrary, certain proposed urban design measures within the Special District zoning regulations would preserve views from areas outside of the rezoning area to the rezoning area's iconic historic resources such as the Cyclone, Parachute Jump, and Wonder Wheel.

TRAFFIC, TRANSIT, AND PEDESTRIAN IMPACTS ON NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

Development occurring as a result of the proposed actions would generate an increase in automobile traffic in the secondary study area. As a result, levels of service would deteriorate at a number of traffic intersections. During peak hours, between one and four intersections in the secondary study area would go from LOS D or better in the future without the proposed actions to LOS E or F in the future with the proposed actions, depending on the peak hour analyzed. Overall, within the secondary study area, the proposed actions are expected to have significant adverse traffic impacts at 7 or 8 intersections (depending on the peak hour analyzed), all of which are located north or east of the rezoning area, along Cropsey Avenue, Neptune Avenue, or Ocean Parkway. As described in Chapter 22, "Mitigation," these impacts could be fully or partially mitigated at some of these intersections during certain peak hours. Unmitigated increases in traffic at the remaining impacted locations would not result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character because the change in traffic over conditions in the future without the proposed actions would be small enough that they would not have a noticeable effect on the character of the neighborhood.

As described above, buses serving the proposed rezoning area and broader study area would become more crowded with the development anticipated to occur under the proposed actions. The proposed actions would result in significant adverse impacts to the B36, B68, B74, B82, and X38 bus routes during the weekday analysis peak periods, and to the B36 bus route during the Saturday analysis peak periods. However, these impacts would be fully mitigated and no significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character would result.

NOISE IMPACTS ON NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

The proposed actions would result in significant adverse impacts at receptor site 6 (West 17th Street between Neptune Avenue and Mermaid Avenue) in the secondary study area. The exceedances would be due principally to noise generated by the large incremental traffic volume on West 17th Street. Although this site would experience significant adverse noise impacts, the proposed actions would not result in a change in acceptability category at this site. In the future with the proposed actions, noise levels at site 6 would remain in the “marginally unacceptable” category, and there would be no significant adverse impact on neighborhood character.

F. CONCLUSIONS

The proposed actions would change the character of the proposed rezoning area for the better. Aside from Coney Island's few remaining historic icons, a few active frontages on Surf Avenue and some residential and commercial buildings on Mermaid Avenue, much of the land throughout the proposed rezoning area is currently either vacant or underutilized. The proposed actions would safeguard and expand upon Coney Island's iconic amusements, while building upon the prime beachfront location to create a vibrant mixed-use community that includes new market-rate and affordable housing as well as retail and neighborhood services.

Land uses introduced by the proposed actions would be consistent with existing land uses and would improve upon existing conditions and conditions in the future without the proposed actions. The amusement, eating and drinking establishments, and hotel development would be consistent with existing development in Coney East and would be supportive of preserving and growing the amusement character of Coney Island. The residential, commercial, and mixed-use development expected to occur in the other subdistricts would serve to revitalize areas that are largely vacant or underutilized. The proposed actions would not be expected to affect land use patterns in neighborhoods surrounding the rezoning area, which are predominantly built out. However, future development resulting from the proposed actions would have the beneficial effect of strengthening the connection between neighborhoods to the north and west of the rezoning area and the amusement district, the beach, and Riegelmann Boardwalk.

Although the proposed actions would introduce a substantial new population and could result in limited indirect residential displacement, the mix of market-rate and affordable housing introduced by the proposed actions, in combination with the existing NYCHA and other government-financed housing, would ensure that the rezoning area and surrounding neighborhoods would maintain a wide range of incomes. In addition, the proposed actions would introduce to the rezoning area an additional consumer population that would contribute to the viability of existing businesses in the rezoning area, thereby helping to retain and enhance the historical amusement component of the rezoning area's economic character.

The proposed actions would substantially change the urban design and visual character of the proposed rezoning area, which would in turn have a positive effect on neighborhood character in the rezoning area. Largely vacant and underutilized land would be redeveloped, and the proposed Special District would improve the streetscape and create a cohesive, coordinated design for the area. The existing topography, street pattern, and block shapes of the rezoning area would be altered, enhancing views and improving pedestrian and traffic circulation. Buildings constructed in the rezoning area would be taller and bulkier than those constructed in the future without the proposed actions, but building heights and forms would be regulated through the special district zoning text to preserve the prominence of existing historic and visual

resources, and the new buildings would be consistent with the tall residential developments in surrounding neighborhoods.

While the proposed actions could potentially result in the redevelopment of Nathan's Famous, a reduction in the visual prominence of the Shore Theater, and potential construction impacts to three non-designated or non-listed resources, it would also improve the context for historic resources such as the Cyclone and Wonder Wheel, thereby maintaining and improving the historic character of the proposed rezoning area.

Development projected to occur under the proposed actions would result in substantial increases in vehicular traffic. Levels of service would deteriorate at a number of traffic intersections and significant adverse traffic impacts would occur at between 16 and 19 of the 30 intersections analyzed within the rezoning area and surrounding neighborhoods. However, some of these impacts would be fully or partially mitigated with a series of traffic improvements and traffic increases at the remaining intersections and would not result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character because the change in traffic over conditions in the future without the proposed actions would be small enough that it would not have a noticeable effect on the character of the rezoning area or surrounding neighborhoods.

Pedestrian traffic and public transit ridership would also increase with the proposed actions. Significant adverse impacts would occur at certain crosswalks and on certain bus lines. However, these impacts would be fully mitigated and would not negatively impact neighborhood character. To the contrary, the increase in pedestrian activity throughout the rezoning area would enliven the streets and have a markedly positive effect on neighborhood character within the rezoning area.

The proposed actions would result in significant adverse noise impacts at receptor site 11 within the proposed rezoning area and receptor site 6 in the secondary study area. However, these significant adverse noise impacts would not result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character. The exceedances at receptor site 11 would be due principally to noise generated by the activities in the proposed amusement park and site 11 is not located in an area where a low level of noise is a defining feature of the neighborhood's character. Further, there are no existing noise-sensitive uses around receptor site 11. The exceedances at receptor site 6 would be due principally to noise generated by the large incremental traffic volume on West 17th Street. However, the proposed actions would not result in a change in acceptability category at this site, with noise levels at site 6 remaining in the "marginally unacceptable" category.

Overall, the proposed actions would not result in any significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character. *